

TOM PERRIELLO
5TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4605

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September 29, 2009

Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rangel:

Last week, the House of Representatives passed HR 3548, the Unemployment Compensation Extension Act, legislation which extends unemployment benefits for workers in high unemployment states. While this timely extension helps many displaced workers across the country, it does not provide any additional relief to my constituents.

At 6.5%, Virginia's unemployment rate is among the lowest in the country, thereby disqualifying it for additional benefits under HR 3548; it is not, however, representative of the entire Commonwealth. In my district, there are localities and counties experiencing unemployment rates as high as 22.1% and 15.3%. While economic recovery is in sight for many communities around the country, people living in these areas are still struggling. With this being said, when HR 3548 goes to conference committee, I respectfully request your support in securing an immediate 6-week unemployment benefit extension for all states.

In addition to this request for immediate relief, I also ask for your assistance in developing an alternate formula to determine unemployment benefit needs in the future. As illustrated by my district, some localities have a much higher need than those in neighboring areas. An alternative measure that takes regional unemployment rates into account may serve as a better measure for eligibility, and I believe it could lower costs by helping those most in need. As HR 3548 is set to expire at the end of this year, I respectfully request that the Committee work towards developing alternatives to the 8.5% threshold to determine states' eligibility for unemployment benefits in any future legislation that may be considered.

As Congress moves towards conference on this legislation, and as your Committee considers the possibility of an extension for next year, please keep in mind the difficulties and struggles faced by unemployed workers in states that will be left behind by HR 3548.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. I look forward to working with you to strengthen this legislation and welcome the opportunity to discuss it with you further.

Sincerely,



Tom Perriello
Member of Congress

CC: Speaker Nancy Pelosi
Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
